

# Hope With No Change

Mark 6:7-13    October 1, 2025

In 1933, a satanic regime was starting to take power in Germany. President Roosevelt needed to appoint a new ambassador to Germany, but everyone he asked turned him down. In a last-minute move, FDR nominated an outsider with *no* experience in diplomacy - a history professor named William Dodd.<sup>1</sup>

Many in the State Department had reservations about his suitability. William was neither a political operative nor a member of the social elite - that's who was usually appointed.<sup>2</sup> Even so, the Dodd family set out for Germany a month later. William didn't intend on becoming a great diplomat. He took the job because he thought it would provide him free time to write a multi-volume historical work.<sup>3</sup> He has since been called a "diplomat by accident."<sup>4</sup>

But this accidental ambassador found himself called into service during one of history's most pivotal moments. No longer was he someone who simply *perused* history - he was *part* of it. Though his time in Germany was relatively short, he became an important voice - preaching the dangers of Hitler and his plan to destroy the Jews.

In our text, Jesus commissions and sends out 12 ambassadors of His own. Quite frankly, they're a bunch of misfits - men with no social status, men of humble heritage and little experience in preaching or power. And yet, the Lord is confident that not only are they *sufficient* for the job, but that they will be spiritually *successful* as they go - not because of who *they* are, but because of Who *He* is and the power He sent with them.

If you've been a Christian for a while, you know that *you* are also commissioned and sent to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ. You are an extension of His redemption to a lost and dying world. Seeing this first disciple mission gives us much to think about as we go on our way, carrying the message of Jesus, doing the ministry of Jesus, hopefully in the *power* of Jesus.

**Mark 6:7 - 7 He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs and gave them authority over unclean spirits.**

Jesus had just been in His hometown of Nazareth where He was rejected for the second time.

The first half of Mark's Gospel can be broken up into three sections. Each section opens with a story about the disciples and closes with a story showing a negative reaction to Christ's ministry.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://usgerrelations.traces.org/williamdodd.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Dodd\\_\(ambassador\)#Conflict\\_with\\_State\\_Department](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dodd_(ambassador)#Conflict_with_State_Department)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Dodd\\_\(ambassador\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dodd_(ambassador))

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2011/05/09/135922322/william-dodd-the-u-s-ambassador-in-hitlers-berlin>

<sup>5</sup> Ben Witherington *The Gospel Of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

In this new section, Jesus begins to withdraw out of Galilee into other places. But, on His way out, He first sends the twelve to a variety of Jewish towns to preach the Kingdom and perform miraculous signs to validate their message.

Mark's account of their mission assignment has a few details but is rather brief. Matthew's Gospel has a full 35 verses of Jesus' instructions to them. For example: On *this* trip they were *only* to Jewish villages. No Gentiles, no Samaritans.<sup>6</sup> That doesn't mean Jesus didn't care about those groups. Later in His speech Jesus says, "You'll get there - you *will* bear witness to Gentiles eventually. In fact, you're going to their governors and kings."<sup>7</sup> But *this* trip was for the Jews.

Why did the Lord send them out in pairs? It's certainly better to have someone with you, but this isn't the rule every missionary has to follow. In Acts we see God sending individuals out multiple times. Philip on the road is a prominent example.

Jesus sent them to tell the nation of Israel that the Messiah had arrived. The Kingdom of God has come near. In Jewish law, testimony wasn't accepted unless there were at least two witnesses.

Not only did He send them out together to corroborate each other, He sent them out with *power*. Here it says power to cast out unclean spirits. Matthew adds He gave them the ability to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, and even raise the dead.<sup>8</sup>

But notice: It's not that He gave them *ability*, He gave them *authority*. They didn't learn it like a skill or take a potion that changed their DNA. Christ sent them out to act as His representatives who could apply *His* power for this mission. As they went, they were an extension of Him.

Now, this was new. To this point, Jesus' activity in this Gospel was limited to where Jesus was. But now He's saying, "You can go out away from where I am and accomplish My work the way I do." And so now, these guys who had so far only been *followers* were to become active agents. Not only watching the Lord, but working for Him with the same effect that He Himself had.

**Mark 6:8-9 - <sup>8</sup> He instructed them to take nothing for the road except a staff—no bread, no traveling bag, no money in their belts, <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not put on an extra shirt.**

These rules were specific to this particular mission. They are *not* prescriptive for every missionary today. That's not a cop out, the Bible says so. In Luke 22, at the Last Supper, Jesus says to the disciples, "Hey remember that time I sent you out with no money bag or anything? Well, *now* you should get yourself a money bag and some other things."<sup>9</sup> When we read our Christian commission at the end of Matthew, there are no specific instructions about what you should or shouldn't have with you - only that you're to go throughout the world and make disciples.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 10:5-6

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 10:18

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 10:8

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:35-36

But *this* trip was to be sudden, short, and absolutely reliant on God. It reminds me of Paul Revere's ride to announce the British are coming. There wasn't a lot of time to waste, he just had to go. In a sense, they needed to go *right then* to tell these villages, "The Kingdom is at hand!"

The commands Jesus gave them would put them in a vulnerable position physically, but we know God was going to watch over them - that He was going before them - that He was going to pour out His power in and through them and accomplish incredible things. Yes, they would have to depend on Him for provision, but the Christian life is meant to be one of dependence. That *doesn't* mean you're not allowed to have a savings account or keep your pantry stocked. The strictness of this mission was specific. But it does remind us that our lives *really are* dependent on God - *and that's ok* because He is a Provider and Protector. He *can* be trusted with your future.

Linguists point out a couple of interesting things in these verses: They weren't allowed to even take pocket change with them.<sup>10</sup> No dimes or nickels. And a number of scholars believe the bag referred to here would be a beggars bag.<sup>11</sup> They *would* be dependent on charity and donations, but they were not to *beg* for it.

That's how we try to approach ministry. Listen the activity of our church, the staff and equipment we have, the events we put on, the heating and air conditioning, all of that is dependent on donations. And we are so thankful and blessed by the fact that people give to this work that God established 40 years ago. But too many churches have become *beggars* in their behavior. Constantly asking for money, pressuring for donations, telling you you *may* have given already, but you need to give *more*. It's not right. The Bible clearly prescribes that God's people give toward His work and that they should not do so reluctantly, but it should *never* be under duress or out of compulsion.<sup>12</sup>

**Mark 6:10-11 - <sup>10</sup> He said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that place. <sup>11</sup> If any place does not welcome you or listen to you, when you leave there, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."**

The disciples went out as heralds of the Messiah with mind-blowing power, but it was a humble authority. They went out to *call*, not to *conquer*. If the message wasn't received, they moved along.

Jesus told them wherever they decided to stay, they needed to not change locations while they were in that village.

I was in choir for a few years in college. In the summers we would go on weeks-long tours. Most of the time we did home stays - a few guys to a home. We'd get to a spot, get our assignments, then the next day we'd get back together with the whole group and say, "How's *your* house?" It always *felt* like everyone else was staying in Cinderella's castle while we were in Dickens' Bleak House.

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<sup>10</sup> Frank Gaebelin, D. A. Carson, Walter Wessel, and Walter Liefeld *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

<sup>11</sup> Witherington, Brooks

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7

The point for the disciples was that they shouldn't be looking for better accommodations.<sup>13</sup> *Ministry* was the goal, not largesse. Meaning none of these guys should appear on the *PreachersnSneakers* instagram account.

How long should they stay? Jesus didn't say. Each pair would have to be led by the Spirit and respond to the specific circumstances. The context indicates this was not a long trip.

There's an interesting verse in the Didache - which was a first century document that isn't inspired, but was used as a sort of church manual. It says that if a minister stays in a house like we see here, this is the rule: "he shall abide but one day; but if there be need, the next day also; but if he abide three days he is a false prophet."<sup>14</sup>

But notice this also: Even though they were going out with *Good News*, with power, with miracles, with humbly and grace, Jesus told the disciples they should *expect* a some rejection. Just as many people refused to believe Jesus, so they would refuse His ambassadors.

There is no silver bullet in ministry that will convince every heart. Not even miracles. Jesus and the disciples were performing *tons* of miracles. Still, many *would not* believe. But, as ambassadors, we are sent out to *try* to convince people of the truth of the Gospel. In the end, if they will not listen, we do not kill them, we do not force them, we move on to the next place the Spirit sends us.

**Mark 6:12-13 - <sup>12</sup> So they went out and preached that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> They drove out many demons, anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.**

The disciples are going to come back and be super excited about all that happened. In fact, they're kind of surprised that they were able to do what Jesus sent them to do!

They *did* work a lot of miracles, however, they weren't going on a *miracles* tour. They preached repentance. The *message* was the important thing. They didn't bill themselves as faith healers. They went as representatives of the Messiah. *Now* was the time to receive Him. *Now* was the time to *believe* His Good News. *Now* was the time to *turn* from sin and walk with God. It was time for their listeners to change their minds and their actions to align with what God had revealed.<sup>15</sup>

Mark points out that they anointed people with oil. But *Jesus* never anointed people with oil when He healed them. So why were they doing something He didn't do?

It demonstrates that it wasn't *them* doing the miracle. *They* weren't the miracle workers - *God* was doing it *through* them. When *Jesus* commands demons, when He touches the leper, when He raises the dead, it's *Him* doing it, because He is God. But we are not. And if the Lord wants to work a miracle through our service, praise be to *Him*, because it's *His* power, not ours.

<sup>13</sup> James Brooks *The New American Commentary, Vol. 23: Mark*

<sup>14</sup> Didache 11:5

<sup>15</sup> Robert Utley *The Gospel According To Peter: Mark And I & II Peter*

But this was a monumental moment in spiritual history. It revealed that Christ's work was not limited to Christ. Don't get me wrong, it's all *His* power and ability and direction, but here He is, the King of kings, the Lord of glory, saying, "I'm willing to send out ambassadors with *authority*. I'll accomplish the supernatural through My servants, even though they're imperfect, even though they aren't elite, even though I could keep it all to Myself, even though they themselves struggle to believe."

But God *wants* His message to go to every corner of the globe. He *wants* every life on your block to be transformed by the Gospel. And so, He sends ambassadors to be *extensions* of Himself.

You and I were not appointed for the Mark 6 mission. We've been appointed to the Matthew 28 mission. You are called to communicate the Gospel to someone. In fact, more than someone.

What is the Gospel? That humanity has been ruined by sin. We are dead in our trespasses. Unless Someone intervenes, our lives are hopeless and we will spend eternity in hell. But God came down from heaven, put on flesh, lived a perfect life, died in our place to pay the debt we all owe for the wrong things we have done. Three days later, He rose from the dead and He ascended into heaven to rule and reign on His throne forever. Now, God has invited us to be in an ongoing, dynamic, personal relationship with Him, all the days of our lives, to receive His free gift of salvation - a gift given by His grace and received through faith. And when we receive it, He transforms every aspect of our lives.

That's the message. But we're not *only* sent out with a message, but with *power*. Acts 1:8. 2 Timothy 1:7. 2 Peter 1:3. 1 Corinthians 4:20. God gives us *power* so we can be ambassadors with authority.

And yet, we often feel powerless. I'm not even talking about performing miracles or raising the dead. Why is it that there seems to be so little *power* as we represent God?

The Sadducees didn't know the power of God because they didn't know the Scriptures.<sup>16</sup> The disciples often faltered because of their *lack* of faith. Even *they* sometimes struggled to believe the miracles they saw! The question is whether we believe God can do what He says He wants to do in our lives. Or do we think it can't really happen? We can't *really* be content. We can't *really* be selfless. We can't *really* have peace or joy. God not only says you *can*, He says you *do have these things already*. You *have* the power of God because God dwells *in* you and the Gospel *is* power.

FDR didn't want the ambassador to Germany to be a cunning strategist or a ruthless political operative. He wanted the ambassador there to be a "beacon of American freedom and hope in a land of gathering darkness."<sup>17</sup> William Dodd *represented* a "kingdom."

Do we believe what Jesus has said? Do we believe that we have power to live out our faith in ways that will change lives? Do we see ourselves as Christ's ambassadors - extensions of Him?

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 22:29

<sup>17</sup> Erik Larson *In The Garden Of Beasts*